

# DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Distribution: X and Z

## POLICY GUIDE 2003.02 ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) YOUTHS

**DATE:** February 3, 2003  
**FROM:** Jess McDonald, Director  
**TO:** Rules and Procedures Bookholders, Child Protection and Child Welfare Staff,  
Purchase of Service Agency Staff  
**EFFECTIVE:** Immediately

### I. PURPOSE

This Policy Guide replaces Policy Guide 2002.17 dated December 23, 2002 the purpose of which was to establish procedures to promote the adjustment and well being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, and to set forth procedures for the assessment and treatment of mental health issues of DCFS/POS wards presenting with LGBTQ identity concerns. Through these procedures, the Department is providing guidance to staff and improving coordination of services for wards and their families. To be effective, all child welfare workers must receive ongoing training and education to fully understand the needs and issues confronting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning youth, as they come to terms with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This revised Policy Guide makes minor revisions to the text but adds many more resources to **Attachment A Support, Education and Counseling Resources for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youths**. Revisions and additions are underlined.

### II. PRIMARY USERS

The primary users of this Policy Guide are direct service staff and supervisors of DCFS and purchase of service agencies.

### III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many children and youth, the issue of understanding one's sexuality and gender identity is often a time of great turmoil and stress. For LGBTQ youth, particularly youth of color, this issue is even more difficult to navigate, as they are faced with both internal (from within one's self) and external (from one's environment) prejudice and discrimination.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth face many challenges growing up in a predominantly heterosexual society. According to the Child Welfare League of America, LGBTQ youth are at higher risk than their heterosexual counterparts for emotional or physical abuse from family members, failed out-of-home placements, and/or institutional neglect or abuse. Psychologically, LGBTQ youth are at substantially greater risk than their heterosexual counterparts for suicide attempts, runaway behavior,



homelessness, substance abuse, emotional and physical victimization, high-risk sexual behaviors and pregnancy. In the school setting, LGBTQ youth are more likely to withdraw from or miss school due to fear, intimidation or threats from other students, and/or damage to their personal property. Further, heterosexual youth may fear discrimination, social alienation, and verbal/physical abuse, should they openly offer support to a youth identified as LGBTQ. Consequently, many LGBTQ youth are unlikely to reveal their sexual orientation, particularly to people in perceived positions of authority (e.g., social service staff, family members, caregivers, teachers, church members, etc.).

#### **IV. CHILD WELFARE WORKERS DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN WORKING WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) YOUTH**

##### **Do's**

1. Child welfare staff must seek consultation immediately with the consultants identified below in Section VIII on all cases involving children and youth having known or suspected sexual orientation or gender identity issues.
2. Child welfare staff should always respect and maintain a youth's privacy regarding his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Never disclose this information without the youth's permission. To ensure safety and privacy, any observation, suppositions or conclusions regarding a youth's perceived or stated sexual orientation should be referred to only in case notes.
3. Child welfare staff must consider their own attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and lack of knowledge surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.
4. When there is a risk of impending emotional or physical harm to the youth in his or her placement due to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity issues, child welfare staff will consider the removal of the ward from that placement when the risk cannot be mitigated.
5. Document only service recommendations in the ward's service plan, as they relate to specific daily living, emotional or behavioral concerns. Child welfare staff will implement recommendations made from expert consultation within five working days of the consultation.

##### **Don'ts:**

1. Do not make written reference to a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity.
2. Never address youth with sexual orientation or gender identity concerns as deviant or pathological.
3. Do not contract or seek treatment services for the purpose of changing a youth's sexual orientation or identity.

## V. IDENTIFYING A NEED

A ward may self-identify, or be identified as having questions surrounding her or his sexual orientation or gender identity by child protection and child welfare staff, school personnel, a birth or foster family member, a therapist, or others from within the community. The DCFS/POS caseworker should then notify her/his supervisor. Consultation with a Department-identified expert (see section VIII) must be made immediately to address the youth's safety and needs. It is the responsibility of the DCFS/POS caseworker and supervisor to ensure that recommendations from the consultation are carried out within seven days.

It is important to recognize that sexual orientation, although a central facet of one's personality, is only one aspect of a youth's identity, and that *orientation may not always be a factor in the youth's emotional or behavioral concerns*.

## VI. MEETING THE NEED

Most needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning youths can best be met through caregiver and family support, community support, education groups, and/or peer counseling. The ward's family and foster family members may also need assistance in supporting the LGBTQ youth. Families' and friends' participation in education and support groups, such as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) should be encouraged.

In some cases, youths having severe emotional reaction and/or behavioral concerns may require more intensive services, such as outpatient short-term counseling or psychotherapy. When a ward or family member is having a more severe emotional reaction to the youth's sexual orientation or identity (e.g., persistent depression or anxiety, engaging in substance use or dangerous/high-risk behaviors, social withdrawal, risk of family rejection, placement disruption), more intensive services may be required, including, but not limited to, individual, group or family therapy.

If there is risk of impending emotional or physical harm, the ward's removal from the placement must be considered when the risk cannot be mitigated. When placement stabilization or reunification is no longer viable and/or in the best interest of the ward, the DCFS/POS case manager must make every effort to ensure that the ward is placed in a "gay-affirming" environment.

## VII. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A is a Department-created list of available resources, including mental healthcare providers, support and education services, and possible residential and/or foster placements. *This list is not definitive and will be updated regularly.*

**VIII. FOR CONSULTATION, TRAINING AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, PLEASE CONTACT:**

In Cook and Northern regions: Larry M. Small, Psy.D.  
(312) 814-5987  
[Lsmall@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:Lsmall@idcfs.state.il.us)

In Central and Southern regions: Gayle Hansen, LCSW  
(309) 693-5400  
[Ghansen@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:Ghansen@idcfs.state.il.us)

**VIII. FILING INSTRUCTIONS**

Replace Policy Guide 2002.17 filed with Procedures 302.320, Counseling or Casework Services, with this revised Policy Guide.

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**SUPPORT, EDUCATION AND COUNSELING RESOURCES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,**  
**TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING YOUTHS**

***COOK COUNTY RESOURCES***

**AFFINITY**

5650 S. Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago (773) 324-0377

**TRANS-GENESIS SOCIAL SERVICES**

4554 N. Broadway, Chicago (773) 878-0890

**HORIZONS YOUTH SERVICES**

961 W. Montana, and 3739 S. Indiana, Chicago (773) 472-6469

**HOWARD BROWN:**

Youth Drop-In for ages 13 – 24 years  
2861 N. Clark (Fridays, 6-9 p.m.)  
(773) 388-1600

**MINORITY OUTREACH INTERVENTION PROJECT**

1255 S. Wabash, Suite 2-S, Chicago (312) 986-0661

**PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS (PFLAG)**

Located throughout Chicago, Lakeview, Glenview, Hinsdale, and  
Streamwood IL (773) 472-3079

**TEST POSITIVE AWARE NETWORK**

5537 N. Broadway/1258 S. Belmont, Chicago (773) 989-9400  
Peer Support, testing and education for youth ages 18-24 years

**LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE & EDUCATION FUND**

11 East Adams, Suite 1008  
Chicago, IL 60603-6303  
ph: 312.663.4313  
Helpline: 1-866-LGBTeen

**UPTOWN TEEN HEALTH CENTER - CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**

(773) 506-4654  
Full-service Health Center

**CHICAGO BLACK LESBIANS AND GAYS**

(312) 409-4917

**AUNT MARTHA'S YOUTH SERVICES**

4343 Lincoln Hwy Ste. 430, Matteson (708) 747-2701 x573

**OUTYOUTH AUSTIN HELPLINE**

1-800-96-YOUTH

**ASSOCIATION OF LANTINO MEN FOR ACTION**

(773) 929-7688

**PRIDE YOUTH (AFFILIATED WITH LINKS NORTH SHORE YOUTH HEALTH SERVICES)**

(847) 441-6191 ext. 3

LGBTQ youth groups in Evanston and Palatine for ages 13-18 years

**GAY, LESBIAN, STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK (GLSEN)**

5210 N. Wayne Ave.

Chicago, IL 60640

(312) 409-1835

National network of parents, students, educators and others to end discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in K-12 schools

***DUPAGE COUNTY RESOURCES***

**DUPAGE QUESTIONING YOUTH CENTER**

17 W. Maple, Hinsdale (630) 415-2053

***INDIANA RESOURCES***

**ALTERNATIVE OF NW INDIANA**

(219) 923-0095 or 888-NWI-GAYS

**INDIANAPOLIS YOUTH GROUP NATIONAL HOTLINE**

1-800-347-TEEN

***DOWNSTATE RESOURCES***

**OUTPOST COMMUNITY CENTER**

123 W. Church Street

Champaign, IL 61820

(217) 239-4688 (Help-line)

**RAINBOW YOUTH OUTREACH**

Peoria, IL

(309) 673-7954 (Help-line)

**RAINBOW YOUTH CENTER**

Belleville, IL 61820

(618) 234-0291 (Help-line)

**RAINBOW CAFE**

P.O. Box 2

Carbondale, IL 62903-002

(618) 521-2328

Youth drop-in for high-school aged youth

**PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS (PFLAG) OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS**

C/O Unitarian Fellowship of Carbondale

301 W. Elm Street

Carbondale, IL 62901

(618) 977-7953

**SALUKI RAINBOW NETWORK**

C/O Student Development  
MCC 4425  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, IL 62901-4425  
(618) 453-5151  
University-affiliated LGBTQ student organization

**CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

515 South Orchard Drive  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
(618) 457-2232  
An Open and Affirming Congregation

**CARBONDALE UNITARIAN CHURCH**

301 W. Elm Street  
Carbondale, IL  
(618) 529-2439  
A Welcoming Congregation

**GAY, LESBIAN, STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK (GLSEN)**

Office for LGBT Concerns, 322 A Illini Union  
1401 W. Green Street  
Urbana, IL 61801  
(217) 377-6788  
National network of parents, students, educators and others to end discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in K-12 schools

**SPRINGFIELD AIDS RESOURCE ASSOCIATION (S.A.R.A. CENTER)**

1315 N. 5th Street, 62702  
(217) 523-2191  
HIV testing and services for those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS

**SALO (SPRINGFIELD AREA LESBIAN OUTREACH)**

P.O. Box 5487  
Springfield, Il. 62705  
(217) 528-SALO  
Lesbian social/networking organization -- has monthly meetings, programs, and activities.

**THE PHOENIX CENTER**

122 E. Laurel  
Springfield, Il. 62704  
(217) 528-5253  
Services for LGBTQ youth

**PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS & GAYS**

(217) 525-0642  
Meets at 6:30 pm on the 4th Tuesday of each month at The Phoenix Center

**AIDSWALK SPRINGFIELD**

PO Box 4882  
Springfield, Il. 62708-4882  
Meets the first Thursday of the month at 5:30 pm at The Phoenix Center

**HATE CRIME HOTLINE: (217) 788-7742**

**SPRINGFIELD POLICE LIAISONS: (217) 527-4448/(217) 788-8311**

**BROTHER TO BROTHER**

PO Box 4681

Springfield, IL 62708-4681

(217) 638-0238

Gay men's social/networking organization -- monthly pot lucks, programs, and activities.

**SPRINGFIELD MCC -- (217) 546-7335**

**THE GAY AND LESBIAN ASSOCIATION OF DECATUR (GLAD)**

PO Box 3783 Decatur, IL 62424-3783

(217) 422-3277

Gay/Lesbian social/networking organization. Monthly meetings, programs, and activities.